

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 23, 2009

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CARDIN APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION FOR 111th CONGRESS

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) today expressed his appreciation to Majority Leader Harry Reid after his appointment as Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) for the two-year period of the 111th Congress. Chairman Cardin, also a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, issued the following statement:

“For more than three decades, the U.S. Helsinki Commission has played an important role in furthering America’s foreign policy objectives. I am honored to take the reigns as chairman at such a critical time in our nation’s history,” said Chairman Cardin.

“This week our nation has begun to write a new chapter in history. President Obama understands the urgent need to rejuvenate U.S. diplomacy to better advance America’s priorities and rebuild our nation’s position as an active and responsible member of the global community. I look forward to working with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as she leads the effort to restore our nation’s credibility in the area of human rights, as we strive to define a 21st century relationship with Russia, and in so many other areas that will help make our nation and our world more secure. As Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I also intend to focus a brighter spotlight on the plight of refugees and the need for transparency in resource extraction and commerce.

The outgoing Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (FL-23), noted, “I want to congratulate Senator Cardin on assuming the Chairmanship of the Commission. I greatly appreciated his advice and candor during my tenure as Chairman. I look forward to playing an active role on the Commission as Co-Chairman and bringing greater attention to the many issues we face abroad.”

Formally known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency that monitors progress in the implementation of the provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords and works to address and assess democratic, economic, and human rights developments firsthand. The Commission

consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce.

Chairman Cardin has had a long-standing career in foreign affairs and human rights. He currently is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and has served as a member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission since 1993, including Ranking Member from 2003-2006. In the 110th Congress, he was appointed as Co-Chairman of the Commission, and is currently Vice President of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly.

Congressman Hastings will soon be appointed by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi as Co-Chairman of the Commission for 111th Congress.